

# THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIP

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## ***ABSTRACT***

A study of 244 adolescents aged between 15 and 17 investigated the benefits and costs of close friendships. Three major cost categories were discovered (conflict, costs of intimacy, and romantic difficulties) along with four benefit categories (intimacy, companionship, mutuality, and material gains). As the level of closeness between the friends increased, the levels of costs and benefits increased for all categories, except conflict where closer friendships had less conflict. Social exchange theory, which evaluates the development and maintenance of relationships using a cost-benefit type analysis, was used to explain why closeness had such an impact. Friendships with females were more intimate and experienced more costs of intimacy, whereas friendships with males were more conflicting, yet had more material gains. Further research needs to be focused on both the negative side of close friendship and cross-sex friendship dynamics.

# ***CHAPTER ONE:***

## ***INTRODUCTION***



Friendship occurs at all stages of life. Whether between preschoolers who play together or retired people having a chat, they play an important part in our lives. One obvious reason such importance is attributed to friendship is that we spend so much time with our friends. Furthermore friends also provide us with a host of benefits that make our lives better today and in the future. On the downside though, friendship can be a burden to us. Difficulties can arise that make life more problematic than before.

Friendship plays a significant part in our lives, especially during the adolescent years. Relationships between peers are seen as being intense and exclusive, showing similarities to marriage relationships. Adolescent friends spend large amounts of time together and often appear inseparable. Friends made at this stage can be for life but alternatively can become our fiercest enemies. This study is interested in how beneficial and costly these important friendships can be during this volatile stage of life.

### ***The Significance Of Friendship During Adolescence***

Adolescence is a time when individuals are beginning to break away from their families and forge an identity of their own. According to Erikson's lifespan development theory (1968), the adolescent is engaging a new crisis: one of identity versus role confusion. Part of developing an identity involves finding their place in the social world. They begin to develop new relationships that are separated from their immediate family and relatives (Kroger, 1982). Peers aid in the development of an identity mainly through the sharing of experiences and conversation. This requires the adolescent to explain themselves to others and thus explain themselves to themselves (Osterrieth, 1969). Often termed self-discovery, this helps the adolescent to determine what it is that is important or characteristic of them, often in distinguishing themselves from others. Why do peers, in comparison to parents, play such a large part in the adolescent's search for identity? This

is mainly because, for adolescents, part of developing an identity of their own is to be independent from the family. Friends represent independence from the family (Rawlins, 1992). They also provide the opportunity for the adolescent to learn how to interact in social situations and the appropriateness of behaviour (Conger, 1973).

In addition adolescents themselves perceive friendships to be the most important relationship they have; more important even than their relationships with their siblings, teachers and parents. Close same-sex friends were attributed with the highest levels of intimacy, companionship, nurturance and instrumental aid (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992). Friends also are more likely to be sources of self-affirmation and hence impact more on self-esteem than parents (Kon & Losenkov, 1978; Lackovic-Grgin & Dekovic, 1990; Wright & Keple, 1981).

Friendships therefore have much significance towards adolescent's search for identity and to the adolescent's themselves. In the transition between childhood and adolescence, it is often then surmised that peers begin to assume many parental roles, such as fulfilling intimacy and nurturance needs (Conger, 1973). Yet contemporary research suggests that friends and parents play different socialising roles that partially overlap (Youniss & Haynie, 1992). Friends do not fully take over parental roles. Instead the implication is that with increasing age, the adolescent's capacity for intimacy is developing (Hunter & Youniss, 1982; Sullivan, 1953). The increased opportunity, need or capacity for intimacy is due to physical changes, changes in social cognition and social roles (Paul & White, 1991)

In summary, the importance of friendship increases between childhood and adolescence. This is because of the role friends play in the development of an identity, the decreasing dependence on the family and the increased need for intimacy.

### ***The different research perspectives***

The study of adolescent friendship has been approached from a variety of reference points that make the integration of past work difficult. One pattern is however apparent. Research perspectives can be classed into one of two categories: First, friendship has been shown to greatly contribute towards the growth from adolescence to adulthood (for examples, see Douvan & Adelson, 1982; Erikson, 1968; Moore & Boldero, 1991; Parker & Asher, 1987) or second, friends impact on the daily experiences of the adolescent (Kon & Losenkov, 1978; Larson, 1983; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992; Rawlins & Holl, 1987). Adolescent research however, has predominantly been growth-oriented, as Rawlins (1992) suggests:

“The activities of adolescents are frequently evaluated not as ends-in-themselves but primarily as opportunities to learn and practice behavioral skills or conditions promoting well-adjusted adulthood”(p60)

Consequently adolescent research concerning friendships should be studied as a social phenomenon as well as a developmental phenomenon. Studies should not only address the consequences of friendship on later life, but also what friendship presently provides for the individual.

There are also some methodological problems that exist in the study of friendship. Researchers often neglect to make clear distinctions between best, close and casual friends (Hays, 1988; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). This is an understandable

definitional problem because friendship encompasses a diverse range of relationships. A friend may be a casual companion, someone with whom one shares everything, or someone who lives in another city and is hardly ever seen. Hays (1988) believes that this breadth of friendship definitions has severely hindered the orderly study of friendships by confusing both researchers and participants alike: Participants are asked to describe friends without establishing which criteria they must use to determine whether a specific friend is appropriate for the study. Difficulty also arises when researchers do define friendship because their definition may differ from firstly other researchers and secondly participants own definitions. Nevertheless, Hays (1989) believes such a clarification is needed because the wider peer group and closer dyadic friendships fulfil different purposes and functions. His study found that close friendships provided more emotional and informational support than casual friendships. He defines friendship as:

“voluntary interdependence between two persons over time, that is intended to facilitate social-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance.” (p395)

Another problem with research concerning adolescent relationships is that it appears to be contaminated by researcher bias (Berndt, 1992). Often peer group-oriented research is undertaken with the presumption that the impact of these friends on the adolescent is negative. An example of this is a study by Eiser, Morgan & Gammage (1991) evaluating peer group smoking behaviour. It speaks of the negative influence peer group friends have on smoking behaviours and a variety of other deviant behaviours. Conversely, close dyadic friendships are perceived as predominantly impacting positively on the adolescent (for examples, see Buhrmester, 1990; Paul & White, 1991).

Taking into consideration the patterns and deficiencies of adolescent friendship research, it is then possible to discern where knowledge of adolescent friendships is lacking. The most salient facet is the negative side of close dyadic friendship (Hays, 1988). Little is known about what the adolescent perceives to be the costs of their close friendships. This research endeavoured to address this neglected aspect by considering both the costs and the benefits of friendship hence adopting a bias-free reference point. Substantial developmental evidence has been gathered concerning the positive influence close friendship has towards adult socialisation. For example, friendship is seen as beneficial as it aids in the preparation for a marriage relationship (Collins & Kuczaj, 1991) and other relationships (Hartup, 1993). Peer group-oriented research has shown how their influence can be negative including peer pressure and deviant related behaviours.

Social exchange theory provides a methodology that fulfils the requirements of researching relationships. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) theorised on the interdependency of dyadic relationships and the costs and rewards related to them. Relationships are chosen to be developed because their outcomes are seen to be more beneficial than costly. Whilst benefits outweigh costs, the relationship will be maintained. Once costs outweigh benefits, however, it is expected that the relationship will dissolve. The methodology has been used in the past in the study of close relationships (for examples, see Burgess & Hutson, 1979; Levinger, 1980). Central to the theory is the analysis of reported benefits and costs of social interactions. Such a methodology allows the investigation of the neglected down-side of friendships as well as the benefits and payoffs.

## ***Benefits of friendship***

Friendship is inherently a beneficial social phenomenon. It protects the individual from experiencing some negative events. The lack of friendship has been shown to aid in the successful prediction of later mental health problems such as schizophrenia and antisocial behaviour (Reisman, 1985). Friendless individuals are more likely to experience loneliness. (Johnson & Aries, 1983; Mitchell, 1976; Ruscoe & Komski, 1989). Hartup (1983) suggests that the absence of friends is considered to be a more serious problem than the over-influence of friends.

The most salient feature differentiating the literature is whether it is approached from a developmental or growth orientation or whether it adopts an adolescent or 'provision' type perspective. It was earlier recognized that most literature is growth-oriented. One of the recurrent themes concerning friendships is that they allow the individual to grow. A variety of terms and methods are used to describe the growth that is achieved through friendship. Erikson (1968) postulates that the major task or crisis of adolescence is the development of an identity. Friendships aid in this pursuit by increasing opportunities for self-discovery which leads to the development of an identity (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Kon & Losenkov, 1978; Moore & Boldero, 1991). Friendships are significant in this respect in that they allow the opportunity for feedback (Sullivan, 1953; Rawlins & Holl, 1987) and provide the method by which adolescents can become more independent from their parents (Claes, 1992; Sullivan, 1953).

However friendships are not only significant in this regard. They also enhance the quality of life. This is manifested through a wide array of experiences ranging from positive feelings to practical help. The study of Buhrmester (1990) found that adolescents who have friends have been found to be more companionate, disclosing and satisfying than

those who are friendless. They also reported being more competent and sociable, less hostile and depressed and had higher self esteem. Friendship therefore provides many benefits to adolescent's experience of life.

The most spoken about and reported benefit or reward is intimacy (La Gaipa, 1979; Schaefer & Olsen, 1981). It is central to the analysis and description of friendships (Monsour, 1992). Intimacy is given a broad range of definitions. One of the most widely agreed upon components is self-disclosure (Monsour, 1992). A participant in Rawlin and Holl's (1987) study spoke of a friend as the following: "You can tell them whatever and you trust them." (p354). According to adolescents, the most significant benefits of friendship are having someone to talk to and to trust (Berndt, 1982). Berndt and Perry (1986) suggested it is not the disclosure itself that is the primary benefit but instead it is the experience of feeling understood, validated and cared for. This could be given the term 'emotional support' or 'nurturance'. Although the adolescent may believe the friend to always be there for them, ultimately this may not be true. Yet it is the perception that is of vital importance to the adolescent. The freedom to self-disclose and know that one is being listened to, along with the knowledge that someone is always there for them, will potentially increase one's self-esteem (Buhrmester, 1990; Greenberg, Siegel & Leitch, 1983; Lackovic-Grgin & Dekovic, 1990). Self-disclosure and emotional support are necessarily interrelated and often the distinction between them may be difficult.

The sharing of feelings and emotions is what differentiates friendship during adolescence from childhood where the sharing of common activities is the focus of the friendship (Claes, 1992). Termed companionship, it is the second type of benefit related to friendship. It involves the sharing of experiences and is the common theme of friendship throughout the lifespan (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Hays, 1985). It may involve the

playing of sport together, sharing hobbies, going out together, positive social interaction or intellectual stimulation (Hays, 1989)

A final type of benefit is that more material in nature. The adolescent may receive useful information or instrumental help from their friends. Friends can be sources of information in any of three forms: advice concerning a problem, a person to check the appropriateness of their behaviour or tangible information like schoolwork. An example of instrumental help is when the friend gives practical aid with a task the adolescent is working on.

In summary, friendships offer the adolescent intimacy, companionship and material benefits. The former two are the most commonly reported.

### *Costs of friendship*

Primarily friendships are beneficial to adolescents. Yet friendships still terminate and difficulties are experienced. Almost all researchers have focused on the benefits and neglected to study the costs of friendship. Only the longitudinal study of Hays (1985) was interested in both their costs and their benefits. There are a few other studies in literature that have made references to costs, but the findings are not structured or categorised in the same organised manner that benefits of friendship have (for examples, see Claes, 1992; Larson, 1983; Rawlins & Holl, 1987 ).

A majority of reported costs and difficulties are related to the intimacy or trust apparent in the friendship. As the adolescent shares' secrets and problems, there is an ongoing risk that the friend may choose to break the confidence and thus violate the trust between them (Callan, 1986; Rawlins & Holl, 1987). Self-esteem can be dented by such a violation of the trust or criticism, hence decreasing feelings of self-worth (Rook, 1984).



Not only are there problems caused by the sharing of oneself but also in being the one who is being confided in. If the confidence is crisis-related, it may mean taking more responsibility for that person in caring for them. As a consequence of this, they may find themselves suffering too, especially if the friend is depressed (Sabini, 1992). Another added responsibility is in keeping the confidence. This can be particularly difficult during adolescence for two reasons: First, friends may not realise the significance of keeping the confidence to the adolescent and thus not be excessively perturbed at sharing it. Second, because adolescence is a time when acceptance is sought almost obsessively at times, friends may share the confidence to attain popularity or acceptance from others.

Another type of cost is that which is related to spending so much time with the friend. Hays (1985) says that time expenditure is the most commonly reported complaint concerning adolescent's close friendships. It is seen negatively because it can represent a loss of independence, or because it may be detrimental to the adolescent's other relationships, especially with friends. On a more personal level, the adolescent may pick up some bad habits from the friend. In addition, the intensity often apparent in adolescent close friendship may ultimately lead to poorer school performance (Larson, 1983).

Although overt conflict is relatively rare in friendships, there are many indirect forms. Perhaps the most harmful are possessiveness and jealousy (Rawlins, 1983; Selman, 1981). As adolescents attempt to have interdependent relations with friends, either they or their friend may become dependent and possessive. Other sources of conflict are in personality differences with the friend that are prone to making the adolescent feel alienated and misunderstood (Claes, 1992).

As can be seen, little is known about the costs related to adolescent friendships. Relative to the knowledge of the benefits of friendship, research concerning the costs is virtually untouched and at best undeveloped.

### ***Predictors of individual differences***

It appears to be clear that adolescents will perceive specific friendships to contain an assortment of the aforementioned costs and benefits. A variety of factors would aid in the prediction of which costs and benefits are reported within each friendship. These would include personal, interpersonal, societal, situational and developmental factors. This research is interested in one personal and two interpersonal factors that have shown to be effective predictors: level of closeness, the gender of the participant and whether the adolescent is describing a same- or cross-sex friendship.

#### ***Level of closeness***

As noted earlier, researchers often neglect to make it clear what type of friendship, such as close or casual, they are interested in. This is mystifying considering it is known that friendships of differing qualities provide different benefits (Hays, 1988). With respect to its impact on the life of the adolescent, the quality of friendship is seen as considerably more important than the quantity of friends (Youniss & Haynie, 1992). Social exchange theory postulates that as friends become closer, they are more likely to experience more costs and benefits as a result of that friendship. However, valid measures of it are not easily attainable. This is due to a two-part definitional problem. The first of these relates to the confusion surrounding the terms 'level of closeness' and 'intimacy'. The level of closeness between friends is a subjective measure, made by either of the friends, of their perception of how close they feel to their friend. However intimacy is a behavioural

measure that includes levels of self-disclosure and emotional support. These two terms are used interchangeably despite their differing meanings. Although these terms will inevitably be strong correlates, it is possible for one to be intimate with another and yet not feel close to them and vice-versa. They also differ in that intimacy in-and-of-itself is perceived to be a beneficial phenomenon that is primarily positive and proactive in nature. The level of closeness, although usually perceived as positive in nature, is not necessarily so. Many examples can be thought of where closeness between two friends is negative: When two friends spend all their time together, one might find it beneficial because it enhances their self-worth, and yet the other may see it as a loss of independence.

Some robust patterns have been established within literature relating closeness and benefits. Close friendships in contrast to casual friendships are characterised by self-disclosure (La Gaipa, 1977) and emotional support (Hays, 1985). This is in part due to the trust that exists within the friendship (Callan, 1986). According to Rawlins & Holl (1987), trust increases with closeness, and therefore the friends to whom they disclose most will usually be their closest friend. The most salient difference between close friends and companions was the presence of firstly intimacy and confidentiality and secondly stability, help and loyalty (Kon & Losenkov, 1978).

Hays (1985) study found there were no differences in the reported costs of friendships that could be attributed to the level of closeness between two friends. However, close friends were more often reported to be companionate, confiding, emotionally supportive and of instrumental value than non-close friends. The level of closeness was though better at predicting the presence of emotional support and self-disclosure than the presence of companionship. Within the friendships of males, close friends were reported

as being more companionate and useful for information exchange than non-close friends. However, the opposite was found in the friendships of females; that is, companionship and information exchange were more likely to be reported in non-close than close friendships (Hays, 1985).

The level of closeness between two friends has been shown to be a successful predictor of the benefits accruing from friendship. It has not, however, been found to be an efficient predictor of the costs one might expect to be apparent within friendships.

### *Gender Differences*

Two further predictors of the costs and the benefits associated with a specific friendship are the gender of the respondent and whether the respondent is describing a same- or cross-sex friendship.

Researchers have tended to focus on same-sex friendships because of the complexity of cross-sex friendships. This is because participants' conceptions of what a cross-sex friend is, often differ: one may consider a romantic relationship a friendship whereas another will make a distinction between a friend and a partner. Due to the ambiguity of these friendships, some studies have dropped their cross-sex data from analyses altogether (for example, see Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

As well as the confusion surrounding these relationships, other factors make the study of cross-sex friendship more difficult. There are many societal expectations of such a friendship: Rules like "If you spend too much time together, then you must be a couple" put pressures on the friendship; There may be a pressure from peers to become more involved than "just friends". There is the possibility also, that within the friendship the adolescent can perceive the relationship differently with regards to a potential romantic

attachment. According to Mitchell (1976), the sexual element brings to the friendship a set of different dynamics. Therefore, generally the benefits and costs of them are likely to differ in nature. A study of adult friendships by Davis (1985) found this; cross-sex friends shared fewer confidences and helped each other less than same-sex friends. In most cases, same-sex friendships are seen to have more benefits than cross-sex friends during adolescence (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). In conclusion, a distinction is necessary between these friendships because the complicating factors associated with cross-sex friendships cause differences in benefits and costs (Moore & Boldero, 1991).

The most significant difference between the friendships of males and females is regarding intimacy and self-disclosure. Females self-disclose more than males (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1979; Johnson & Aries, 1983; Jones & Dembo, 1989; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993; Moore & Boldero, 1991). Their interactions are more intimate with their female friends than their male friends. At times when a female wishes to share a problem that she hopes to be kept secret, she is much more likely to go to a female friend than a male friend (Buhrke & Fuqua, 1987; Monck, 1991;). The same can be said for males; who are closer and disclose more to their female friends than their male friends (Wright & Keple, 1981). Females are therefore seen as the target of self-disclosure (Youniss & Haynie, 1992). A study of same sex friendships by Youniss and Smollar (1985) found that 60% of female friends' activities and 30% of male friends' activities were intimate discussions. However only 7% of female friends' activities and 27% of male friends' activities were non-intimate discussions.

An increased self esteem can potentially result from friendship. However this is most likely to occur to a male as a result of friendship with a female (Wright & Kelpe, 1981).

A study by Buhrke and Fuqua (1987) found that there are gender differences in the level of closeness reported. Females' friendships with females were reported as having the highest perceived level of closeness. Males' friendships with females had the next highest average followed by females' friendships with males. Male same sex friendships were reported as being the least close.

Gender differences in companionship are not so clearly defined in literature. Both males and females like doing things together but male activities are more likely to be oriented around sports and interests whereas females prefer talking to each other. Often male friendships are said to be typified by companionship and female friendships by intimacy. Much confusion surrounds the issue of whether or not the 'deep-talk', which by definition represents intimacy, is a form of companionship. The non-intimate discussions reported in the same-sex study of Youniss and Smollar (1985), were nearly four times as common in males' friendships. In contrast, the intimate discussions were twice as likely in the friendships of females. The non-intimate discussions could be classified as companionship for it involves spending time together. But should the intimate discussions be categorised as intimacy alone, or as a form of both intimacy and companionship? For both types of discussion, it is necessary that the friends are together, hence companionship is a precursor to intimacy.

Female adolescents rate both their same- and cross-sex friendships as more companionate than males ratings of their respective friendships (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). This conflicts with the generalization that male friendships are typified by companionship.

Concerning the material gains of friendship, even less is known. Females report more instrumental aid from both their same- and cross-sex friendships (Lempers & Clark-

Lempers, 1993). Apart from this finding, there are no studies that have found gender differences in what adolescents receive from their friends.

There exists only one reported study on gender differences relating to the costs of friendships. Males are more likely to complain that time spent with their same-sex friends is wasted time and that the friends are boring and irritating. In contrast, females feel time spent with their friends is not boring or wasted (Hays, 1989).

In summary, two clear gender patterns emerge. The first is that females are more intimate in both their same- and cross-sex friendships. The second is that when females are asked to rate the intensity of specified benefits, their ratings are higher than males. Camarena, Sarigian and Petersen (1990) believe this to be attributable to gender socialization. Females are socialised to be more concerned with social relationships and hence form stronger ties with their friends. Friends take on more value to females, which could explain the higher ratings they attribute to them.

### ***Rationale For The Present Study***

The purpose of this research was to study the benefits and costs of close adolescent friendship. Late adolescents were studied because their cognitions are likely to be more sophisticated. Hence, they are more likely to make distinctions between friendships, with respect to both closeness to the friend (Kon & Losenkov, 1978) and descriptions of friends (Peevers & Secord, 1973). Not only are such evaluations easier for them to make, they can do so more objectively as their perspective-taking ability develops (Parker & Gottman, 1989).

Social exchange theory predicts that the level of closeness or intimacy have a significant impact on many aspects of friendship. This includes the amount and intensity of the

benefits and costs experienced within specific friendships. It is therefore hypothesised that as the level of closeness increases, all benefits and costs of friends are expected to increase in both quantity and intensity.

Considering the apparent lack of knowledge concerning the negative side of friendship, there is a need to give a more balanced perspective. This would involve attempting to find a more comprehensive list of potential difficulties and problems that are associated with friendships. Developmentally, it would be troublesome to make an evaluation of the costs of friendship without first consulting the adolescents themselves. Therefore, through the evaluation of both the costs and the benefits of specified friendships, this study attempted to balance the positive with the negative impact of friendship on the present life of the adolescent and life in the future.

Males and females experience similar costs and benefits as a result of their friendships. However evidence suggests that differences exist in the intensity of these. For example, intimacy is commonly related to females and their friendships. Other costs and benefits are not so well defined and patterns have not been found. In addition, the difficulties encountered studying cross-sex friendships have resulted in there being little research undertaken. Romance and sex have been seen as complicating factors in cross-sex friendship. Consequently, there is insufficient knowledge about these friendships. Despite these complicating factors, friendships between the sexes will undoubtedly have costs and benefits related to them. Therefore this study sought to find the benefits and costs of these friendships.



## ***CHAPTER TWO:***

### ***METHOD***

### ***Participants:***

244 sixth form students aged between 15 and 17, from 5 co-educational schools in the Christchurch area participated in the study consisting of 112 males and 132 females. The students were mainly of Pakeha/European heritage (85.5% of the total sample).

### ***Materials And Procedure:***

A questionnaire was constructed for the purpose of the study from the results from a pilot study of 8 adolescents. Participants were asked to respond to a variety of questions concerning their own experience of friendship. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

**Section A:** Participants were asked to give information concerning gender and race. They were also asked whether they considered themselves to have any close friends at present. If they did not believe they had any close friends, they proceeded to Section B. If they thought they did have a close friend, they moved directly to Section C.

**Section B:** This section was only relevant to those who considered themselves not to have any close friends. Six open-ended questions were asked to determine what these adolescents perceive as the reason for not having any close friends at present and the impact this has on their lives. Only four participants (less than 2%) completed this section. Therefore these data were discarded from further analyses.

**Section C:** This section made an evaluation of the costs and benefits of two specific close friendships. This measure was divided into two subsections: Close same-sex friendship and close cross-sex friendship. The questions were the same for each subsection. The following instruction was given: "Think of your closest [same sex /

opposite sex] friend. Now answer the following questions concerning this friend.”

Participants only responded if they believed they had a close same- or cross-sex friend.

109 males (97% of all males) and 131 females (99%) reported having a close same-sex friend whereas only 73 males (65%) and 100 females (76%) reported having a cross-sex friend. Firstly, participants were questioned with regards to the age and ethnicity of the friend and then whether they considered this friend to be a best friend or not. A measure of closeness between the two friends was attained using Aron, Aron and Smollar's (1992) 'Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale' (IOS Scale). This is a pictorial estimate of closeness. It consisted of seven pairs of circles. The two circles vary from being totally separate (not close) to almost entirely overlapping (very close).

Following this participants were asked to answer two open-ended questions concerning both the benefits and payoffs and the costs and difficulties. The final question for each friendship asked the participants to rate how applicable each of 28 statements were to this friendship on a 5-point likert scale. Some examples of the statements given follow:

ii) My friend is a close companion

viii) My friendship helps me feel better about myself

xx) My friend is intolerant of my other friends

xxiii) I am probably a little too dependent on my friend

Some of statements were derived from benefits and costs of adolescent friendship found in past research. Others came from responses made in the pilot study and the remainder were created by the researcher.

A complete copy of the questionnaire entitled “Adolescent Friendships” can be found in Appendix 1.

The two open-ended questions preceded the 5-point Likert scale question to allow the subjects to respond freely regarding what they perceived to be the benefits and costs of the specific friendship. This is in contrast to the following question that prompted the subjects of various other costs and benefits that they may not have been considered. If the open-ended question had followed this question, many of the responses to the open-ended question may have been primed by the content of the statements.

**Section D:** The final section of the questionnaire asked the subject to think of a friendship that had ended. Three questions were asked concerning the impact and the reason for the loss of friendship.

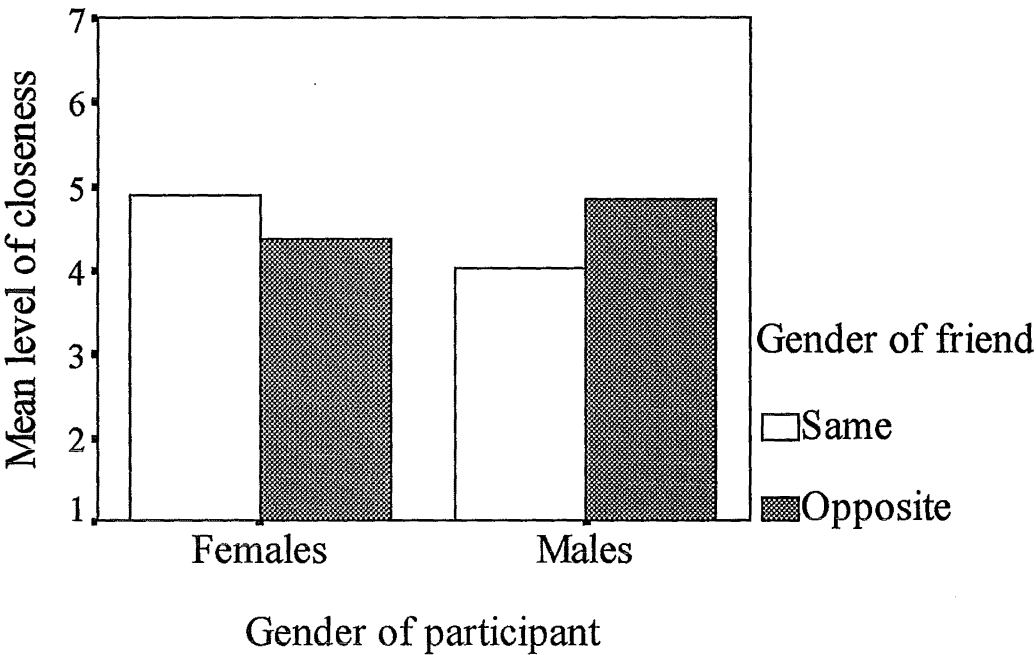
## ***CHAPTER THREE:***

### ***RESULTS***

The questionnaire asked the participants to report on their closest same- and cross-sex friendship. First, they were asked to evaluate how close they felt to their friend. They were then asked questions concerning the benefits and costs related to both friendships.

**1. Level of Closeness**

*Figure 1 Mean levels of closeness on Aron, Aron and Smollars “Inclusion of other in self” scale.*



The participants’ results on Aron, Aron and Smollars’ (1992) “Inclusion of the other in the self” scale, which was used to measure their perceptions of closeness to their closest same- and opposite-sex friends, are presented in Figure 1. These data represent the participants’ mean level of perceived closeness towards people of the same and opposite gender. Higher numbers indicate a perceived closer relationship. The data were analysed with a one between-subjects (gender of participant) and one within-subjects (gender of friend being rated) analysis of variance. No significant main effects were found for the gender of the participant ( $F_{1,406}=1.42$ , n.s.) and the gender of the friend ( $F_{1,406}=.98$ , n.s.).

However, an interaction between the two variables was significant ( $F_{1,406} = 16.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Both males and females considered themselves to be closer to their female friends.

## **2. Benefits and Costs**

Following the reporting of the closeness to their friend, the participants were then asked to describe the costs and the benefits of the friendship. It will be recalled that each participant reported on either both or one of their same- and cross-sex friendships according to which they have.

Two open-ended questions were asked concerning what the respondent considered to be the costs of the benefits of their closest same- and cross-sex friendship. Participants were also asked to say how applicable each of 28 statements were to the friendship they were describing. A 5-point likert scale was used to assess the participant's agreement with higher numbers indicating greater levels of agreement.

### ***Creation of the categories***

The responses to the open-ended questions for both the same- and opposite-sex friendship were coded into discrete categories. Twenty-six cost and sixteen benefit subcategories were created by myself and then further consolidated into four cost (costs of intimacy, conflict, romantic difficulties, and miscellaneous) and four benefit categories (companionship, intimacy, material gains, and mutuality). The four benefit categories were created from the patterns found in literature excepting a new category called mutuality. Due to the neglect of the study of costs pertaining to friendship, the four categories were created and defined by recognising similarities and differences within the 26 cost categories. Appendix 1 contains a list of the 26 cost and 16 benefit categories

and some examples of the responses from the participants. The average number of benefits reported was 1.52 and the average number of costs given was 0.67. Females reported more benefits ( $t_{413}=3.88$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and costs ( $t_{413}=3.08$ ,  $p<.005$ ) on average, than males. The amount of benefits reported for same- and cross-sex friends did not differ for both benefits ( $t_{413}=1.07$ , n.s.) and costs ( $t_{413}=0.62$ , n.s.)

A post-graduate psychology student was given the criteria and also coded the responses. Inter-judge reliability's were calculated using Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa$ ). For the 16 created benefit categories,  $\kappa = .70$  for same and  $\kappa = .76$  for cross-sex friendship. Twenty-six cost categories were created with inter-judge agreement values of  $\kappa = .74$  and  $\kappa = .77$  for same- and cross-sex friendships respectively.

The 28 likert-scale statements were then grouped into the same categories formulated for the open-ended questions. However not all categories had statements applicable to them namely romantic difficulties, miscellaneous costs and mutuality. A score was calculated for each participant by averaging the score over the likert scale statements relevant to the particular category.

## *Analyses*

Initially, chi-square analyses were performed, for each of the eight categories, on the frequency of response data from the open-ended questions. The two variables were gender of the respondent and the gender of the friend. Cramers  $V$  was also calculated to determine the strength of the association between the variables for each category.

A two between-subject and one within-subject analysis of variance was used to analyze the participants' responses to the likert scale statements. The two between-subject variables were: Gender of the participant and reported level of closeness between the



participant and the described friend (Seven levels with higher numbers implying a greater level of closeness). There was also one within-subject variable: the gender of the friend the respondent was describing (Either same- or cross-sex).

Lastly, correlation coefficients were calculated between the level of closeness and the mean score calculated for each of the five categories created using the likert scale statements (It will be recalled that three categories had no applicable likert scale statements hence no correlations could be computed).

A) Costs:

Conflict

Many different forms of conflict were reported. Most common are personality clashes or dislike of a certain aspect of the friend. Some modes of conflict are more confrontational such as arguments, differing opinions and putdowns. Other are less overt but still cause problems within the friendship: These include competitiveness, a lack of understanding from the friend. A final type of conflict is apparent when the friend does not get on with the family or other friends.

*Open-ended Question*

*Table 1 Number of participants who listed conflict as a cost of friendship*

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	16	39
Opposite	23	17

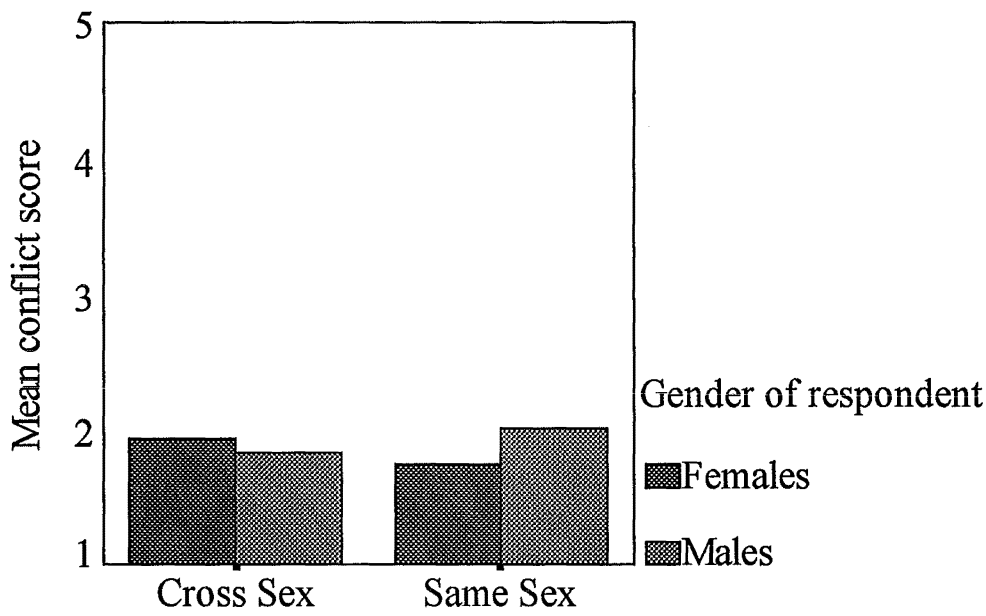
Table 1 is a frequency table of the number of participants who responded with conflict as a cost of their friendship. A chi-square analysis on the frequency of data revealed no

significant relationship between the gender of the participant and whether the friend was of the same or opposite gender ( $\chi^2=1.54, n.s., V=.11$ ).

***Likert Scale***

Figure 2 shows the mean conflict scores for each type of friendship. No main effects were found to be significant. That is, neither the gender of the participant ( $F_{1,27}=2.56, n.s.$ ), the gender of the friend ( $F_{1,27}=.33, n.s.$ ), or the level of closeness between the friends ( $F_{6,27}=1.09, n.s.$ ) had a relationship with the mean conflict score. An interaction was found between the gender of the participant and gender of the friend ( $F_{1,27}=5.77, p<.02$ ). Males were found to be more likely than females to be the target of conflict within friendships.

*Figure 2 Mean conflict scores for each type of friendship*

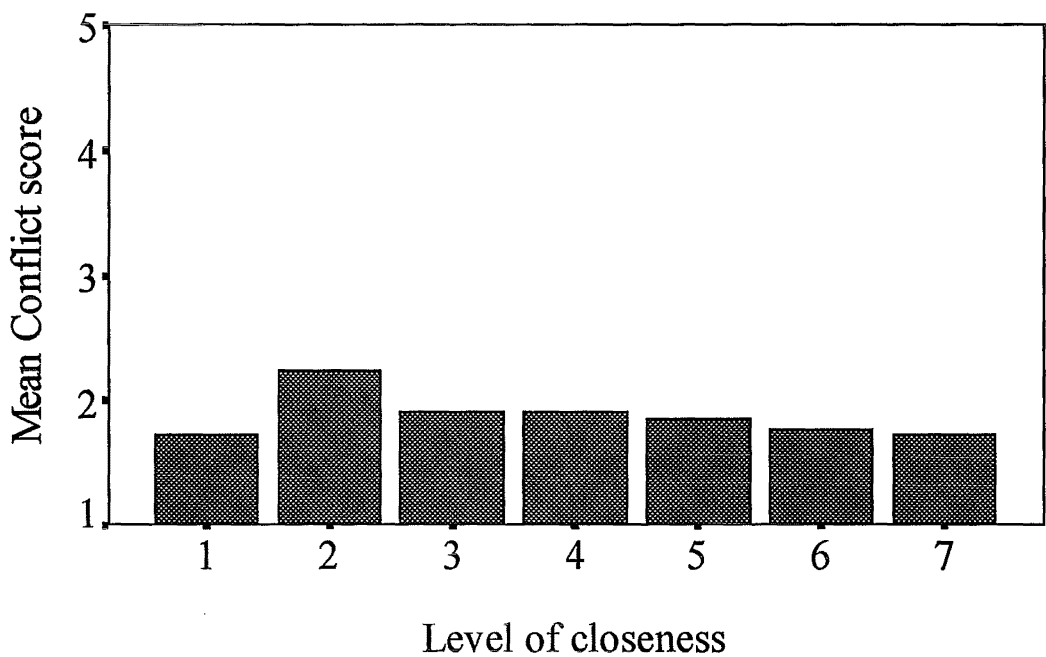


An interaction was found between gender and level of closeness ( $F_{6,27}=2.25, p<.04$ ). As the level of closeness increased, females were likely to have lower conflict scores whereas males scores were less likely to be lower.

*Level of Closeness*

Figure 3 shows that as the level of closeness increased, participants mean conflict scores decreased ( $r = -.17, p < .001$ ). As the friendship was perceived to be closer, the amount of conflict within the friendship reduced.

*Figure 3 Mean conflict scores for each level of closeness*



*Costs of intimacy*

This category contained those costs that are related to having an intimate relationship. These include possessiveness or overdependency on or by the friend. As friends share secrets and problems, there is an ongoing threat that the friend may break the confidence. Participants reported that they tended to spend too much time with their friend (exclusivity) to the point of neglecting others. This was reported as leading to other friendships suffering. In reference to cross-sex friendships only, others often label the relationship as a romantic one which adds further pressures and hassles to it.

*Open-ended Question*

*Table 2 Number of participants who listed costs of intimacy as a cost of friendship*

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	14	32
Opposite	9	29

Table 2 is a frequency table of the number of participants who responded with a cost of intimacy as cost of friendship. A chi-square analysis on the frequency of data revealed no significant relationship between the gender of the participant and the gender of the friend ( $\chi^2=1.19$ , n.s.,  $V=.12$ ) for the costs of intimacy.

*Likert Scale*

*Figure 4 Mean costs of intimacy score for each type of friendship*

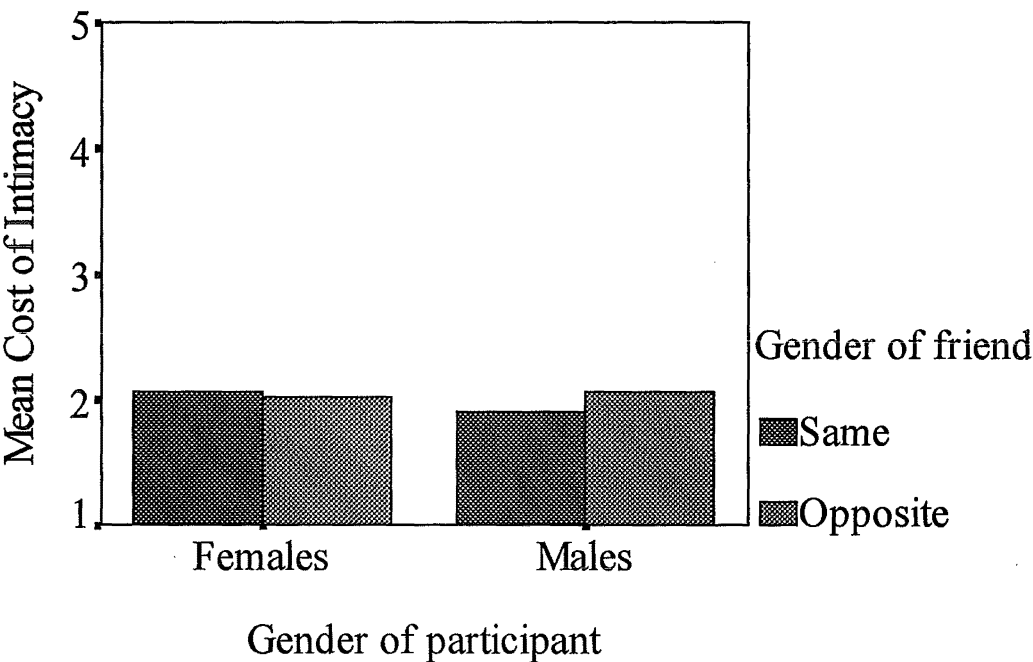


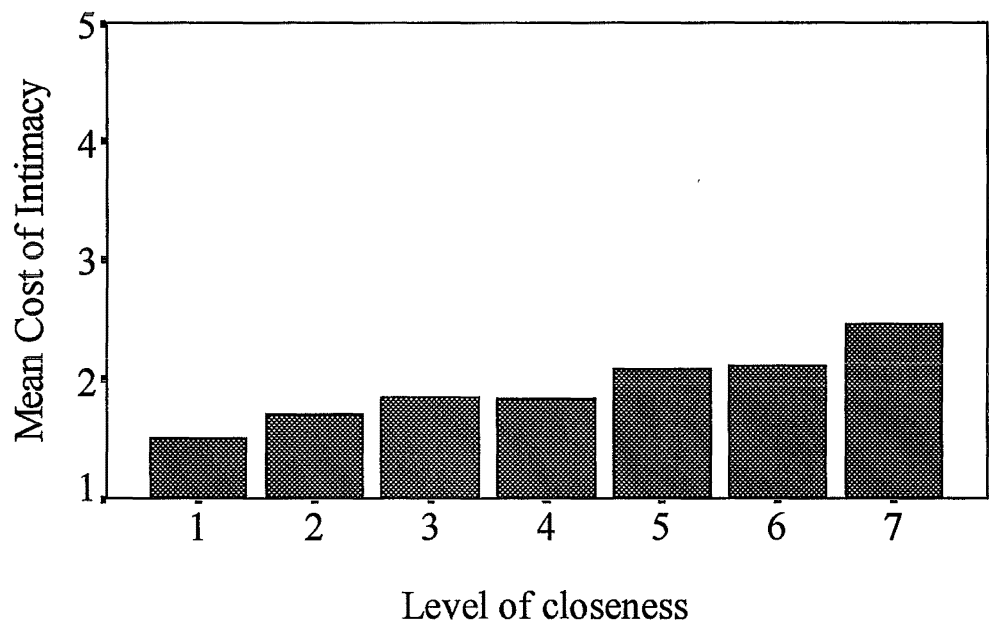
Figure 4 shows the mean intimacy score for each type of friendship. Analysis of the participants' scores on the likert rating scale used to measure the level of intimacy

revealed a main effect for level of closeness ( $F_{6,27}=7.50, p<.001$ ). Costs of intimacy were more applicable to close friendships than less close friendships. Other main effects were not significantly related to the mean intimacy scores: the gender of the participant ( $F_{1,27}=1.19, n.s.$ ); the gender of the friend ( $F_{1,27}=1.19, n.s.$ ).

*Level of Closeness*

Figure 5 shows the positive relationship between the level of closeness and the average costs of intimacy score. The level of closeness and costs of intimacy scores were significantly correlated ( $r = .36, p<.001$ ). The closer the participant felt to their friend, the higher the costs of intimacy score was likely to be.

*Figure 5 Mean costs of intimacy scores for each level of closeness*



**Romantic Difficulties**

Included in this category are problems that are solely related to romance. It is only of relevance to cross-sex friendships. If there had been some past romantic attachment, there can be uncomfortableness or awkwardness in interactions now. More prevalent however is confusion surrounding both the participant’s own feelings towards the friend and vice-versa.

***Open-ended Question***

Table 3 is a frequency table of the number of participants who responded with romantic difficulties as a cost of friendship. Because this related only to cross-sex friendships, a chi-square analysis on the frequency of data was not possible. However this was more likely to be reported by female respondents (22% of female participants responded with this category of cost) than male respondents (6%).

*Table 3 Number of participants who responded with romantic difficulties as a cost of friendship*

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	0	0
Opposite	2	15

**Miscellaneous**

A variety of other responses were given that would not fit into any of the created categories. The following list of miscellaneous costs of friendship were reported by at least 3% of the participants: money; age differences; lack of contact; getting into trouble.

**B) Benefits:**

**Intimacy**

The most talked of researched benefit of friendship is intimacy. Included in this broad category are the typical components associated with intimacy namely self-disclosure and emotional intimacy. Friends were also reported as providing ego support, a sense of security, along with understanding, acceptance and trust.

***Open-ended Question***

*Table 4 Number of participants who listed intimacy as a benefit of a friendship*

Gender of friend	Gender of respondent	
	Male	Female
Same	40	110
Opposite	25	35

Table 4 is a frequency table of the number of participants who responded with intimacy as a benefit. A chi-square analysis of the frequency of data revealed a strong association between the gender of the participant and the gender of the friend ( $\chi^2=27.34$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $V=.36$ ). Females were more likely to report intimacy as a benefit of their same-sex friendships than any of the remaining three types of friendship.

***Likert Scale***

A main effect for level of closeness was found to be significant ( $F_{6,27}= 20.99$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The closer the participant perceived their friend to be, the more likely they were to experience benefits of intimacy within that friendship. Neither the gender of the

participant ( $F_{1,27}=2.56$ , n.s.) nor the gender of the friend ( $F_{1,27}=.33$ , n.s.) were significant main effects.

Figure 6 Mean intimacy scores for each type of friendship

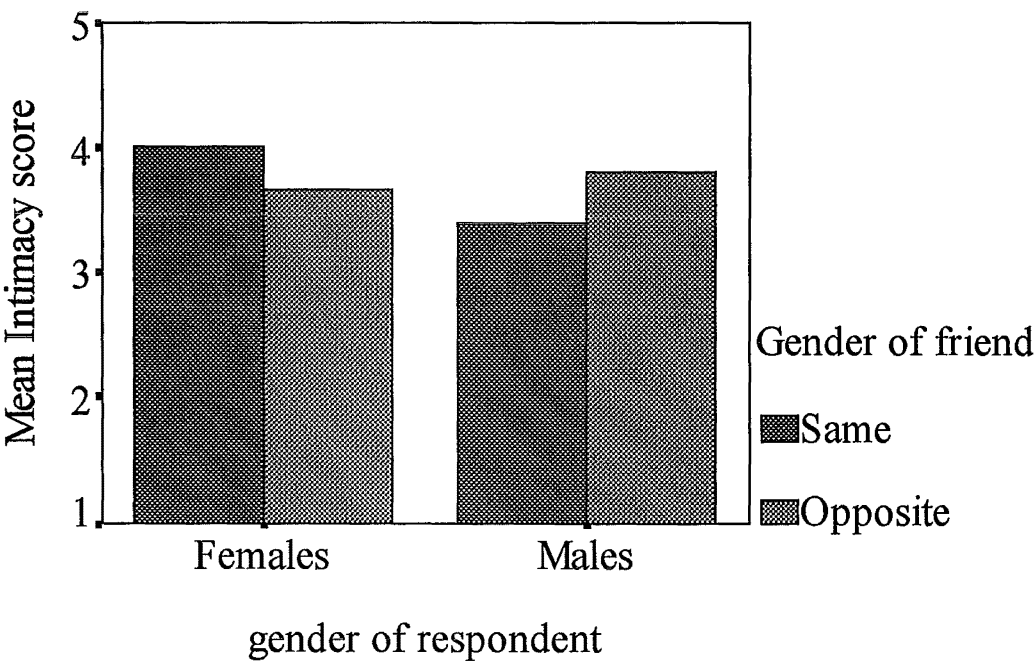


Figure 6 shows the mean intimacy scores for each type of friendship. An interaction was found to exist between the gender of the participant and the gender of the friend ( $F_{1,27}=15.07$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Female friends were more likely to be seen as the source of intimacy for both male and female participants.

An interaction was found between gender and level of closeness ( $F_{6,27}=2.76$ ,  $p<0.12$ ). As the level of closeness with the friend increased, females were significantly more likely to see intimacy as a benefit than as level of closeness increased in male friendships.

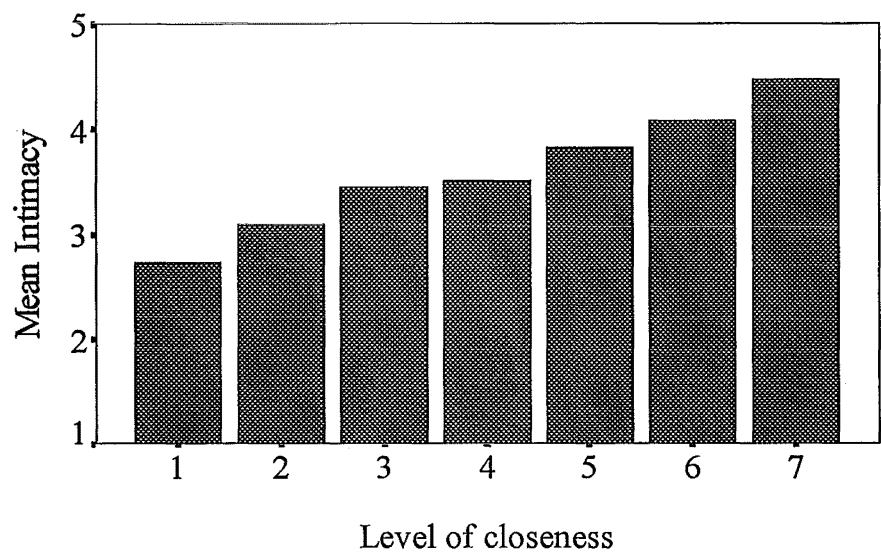
**Level of Closeness**

Figure 7 reveals the strength of the positive relationship between the level of closeness and mean intimacy scores ( $r = .58$ ,  $p<.001$ ). As the level of closeness between the friends



increases, the intimacy score also increases. The closer friends are, the more intimate they are likely to be.

Figure 7 Mean intimacy score for each level of closeness



Companionship

An extremely common benefit of friendship reported in past literature is companionship. It normally involves sharing activities and having fun together but mat simply be having someone to talk to.

*Open-ended Question*

Table 5 shows the number of participants who responded with companionship as a benefit of a friendship. For male same-sex and female cross-sex friendships, companionship was more likely to be a benefit. The gender of the participant and the

gender of the friend were found to be associated ( $\chi^2=9.72$ ,  $p<.002$ ,  $v=.23$ ) Males were much more likely to be seen as sources of companionship.

Table 5 Number of participants who listed companionship as a benefit of a friendship

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	53	61
Opposite	45	28

*Likert Scale*

Figure 8 Mean companionship scores for each type of friendship

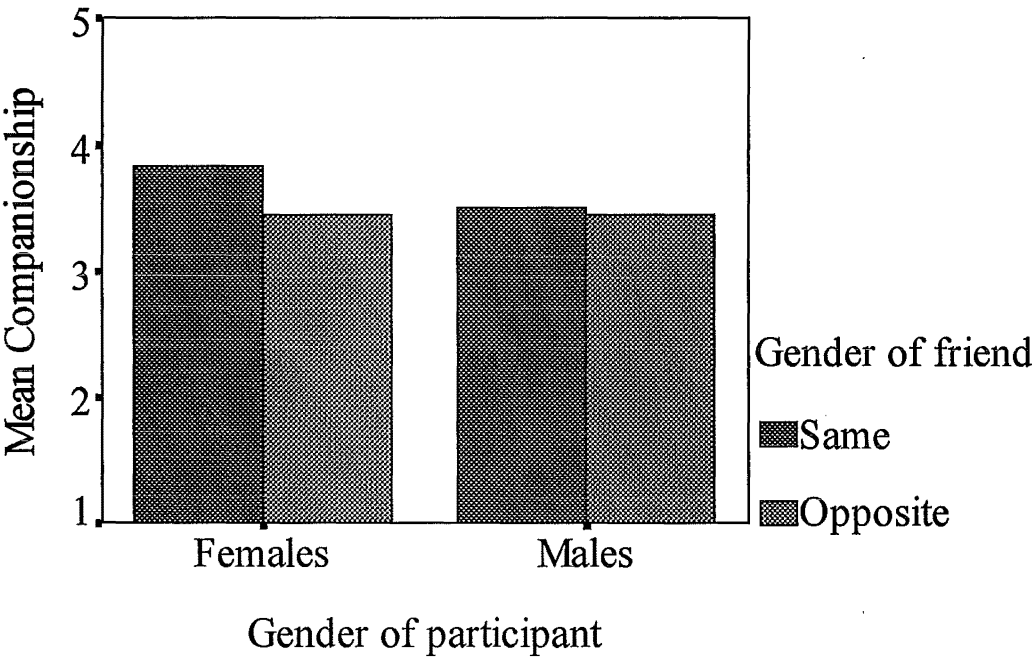


Figure 8 shows mean companionship scores for each type of friendship. A main effect for gender was found to be significant ( $F_{1,27}=5.77$ ,  $p<.017$ ). Females were more likely to see companionship as a benefit than males.

A main effect for gender of friend was found to be significant ( $F_{1,27}=24.03, p<.001$ ). Same-sex friends were more likely to be seen as sources of companionship than opposite-sex friends.

A main effect for the level of closeness was found ( $F_{6,27}=31.12, p<.001$ ). An interaction occurred between the gender of the participant and the level of closeness between the friends ( $F_{6,27}=2.26, p<.037$ ). The closer females were to their friend, the more applicable companionship was to their friendship. That is, the presence of companionship was more affected by closeness in female friendships than in male friendships.

*Figure 9 Relationship between level of closeness and mean companionship score for same- and opposite-sex friendships*

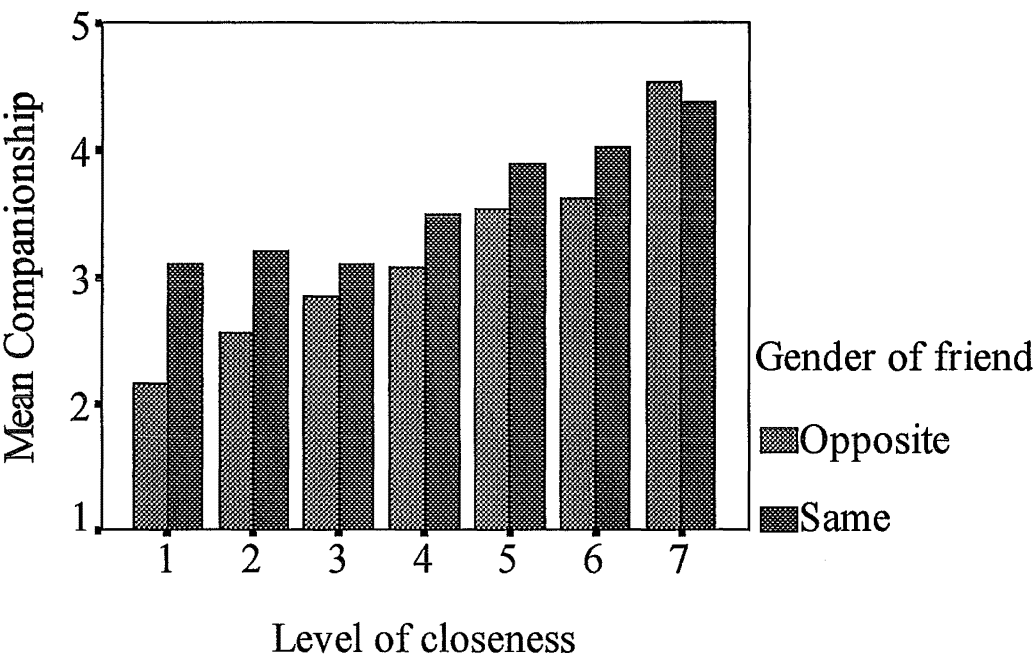


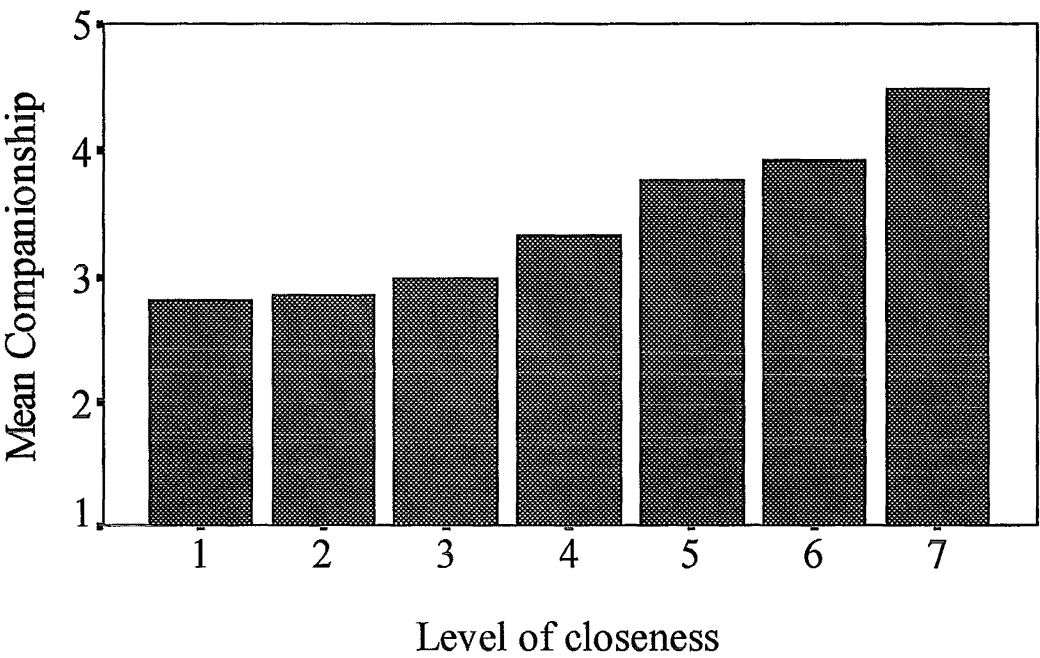
Figure 9 shows the relationship between the level of closeness and companionship scores for same- and cross-sex friends. An interaction was found between the gender of friend and the level of closeness ( $F_{6,27}=4.41, p<.001$ ). Although greater levels of companionship

were found within same-sex friendships, it was found that for cross-friendships, closeness had a significantly greater impact on companionship.

*Level of Closeness*

Figure 10 shows that as the level of closeness increased, the mean companionship scores also increased. A strong correlation was found between them ( $r = .64, p < .001$ ). The closer the friend was perceived to be, the higher the level of companionship.

*Figure 10 Mean companionship scores for each level of closeness*



*Mutuality*

This included the opportunity for one to help another person and having a reciprocating friendship. This was considered to be distinguishable from intimacy in that this was a

friend that the adolescent could do things for instead of someone who they could confide in or trust. Therefore it was a more ‘selfless’ rather than a ‘selfish’ benefit.

*Open-ended Question*

Table 6 is a frequency table of the number of participants who responded with mutuality as a benefit of friendship. The chi-square analysis of the frequency of data revealed no significant relationship between the gender of the participant and the gender of the friend ( $\chi^2=2.55$ , n.s.,  $V=.37$ ).

*Table 6 Number of participants who listed mutuality as benefit of friendship*

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	2	13
Opposite	2	2

*Material Gains*

In contrast to benefits of mutuality, this category was more ‘taking’ or exploitative in nature. The responses included anything that the participant gained from the friendship that added to their experience of life comprising of instrumental support, the sharing of one’s possessions, new experiences or perspectives and meeting new people.

*Open-ended Question*

Table 7 shows the number of participants who gave material gains as a benefit of friendship. A strong association was found between the gender of the participant and the

gender of the friend ( $\chi^2= 21.52, p<.001, v=.44$ ). A greater proportion of females and males reported receiving material gains from friendships with males than from females .

Table 7 Number of participants who listed material benefits as a benefit of a friendship

Gender of friend	Gender of participant	
	Male	Female
Same	28	12
Opposite	18	54

*Likert Scale*

Figure 11 Mean material gains score for each type of friendship

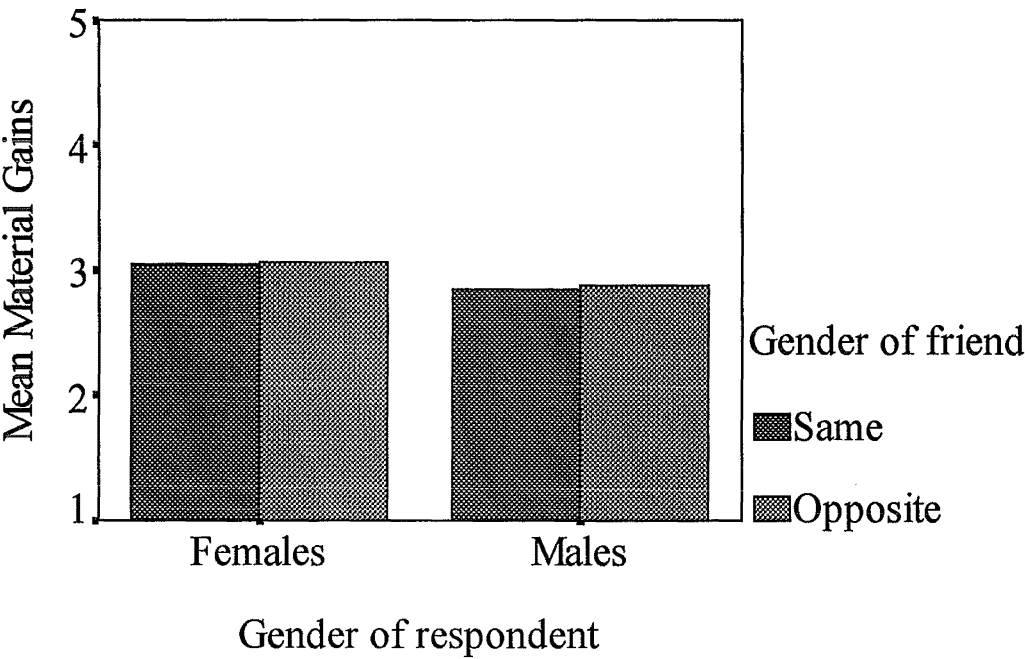


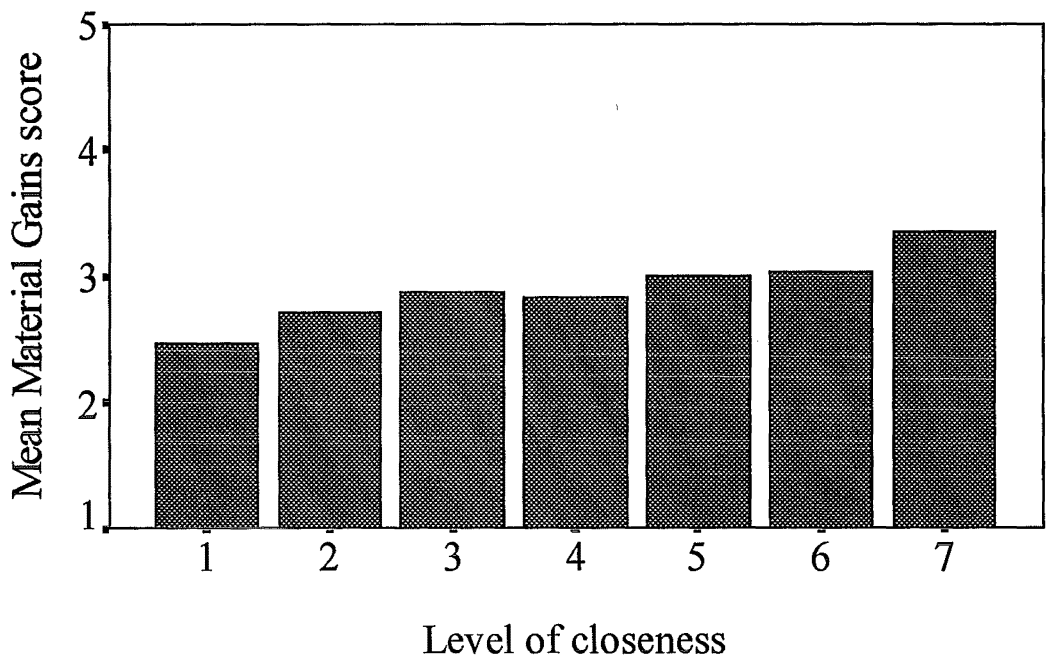
Figure 11 shows the mean material gains score for each type of friendship. A main effect for level of closeness was found to be significant ( $F_{6,27}=4.23, p<.001$ ). As the reported level of closeness increased, the mean material gain score also increased. A main effect for gender was significant ( $F_{1,27}=4.25, p<.040$ ). Females were more likely to see material

gains as a benefit of friendship than males. The final main effect, that of gender of friend was not found to be significant ( $F_{1,27}=.45$ , n.s.).

***Level of Closeness***

As the level of closeness increased, so did the amount of material gains ( $r=.2823$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The closer the respondent perceived the friend to be, the more likely they were to see material gains as a benefit resulting from the friendship.

*Figure 12 Mean material gains scores for each level of closeness*

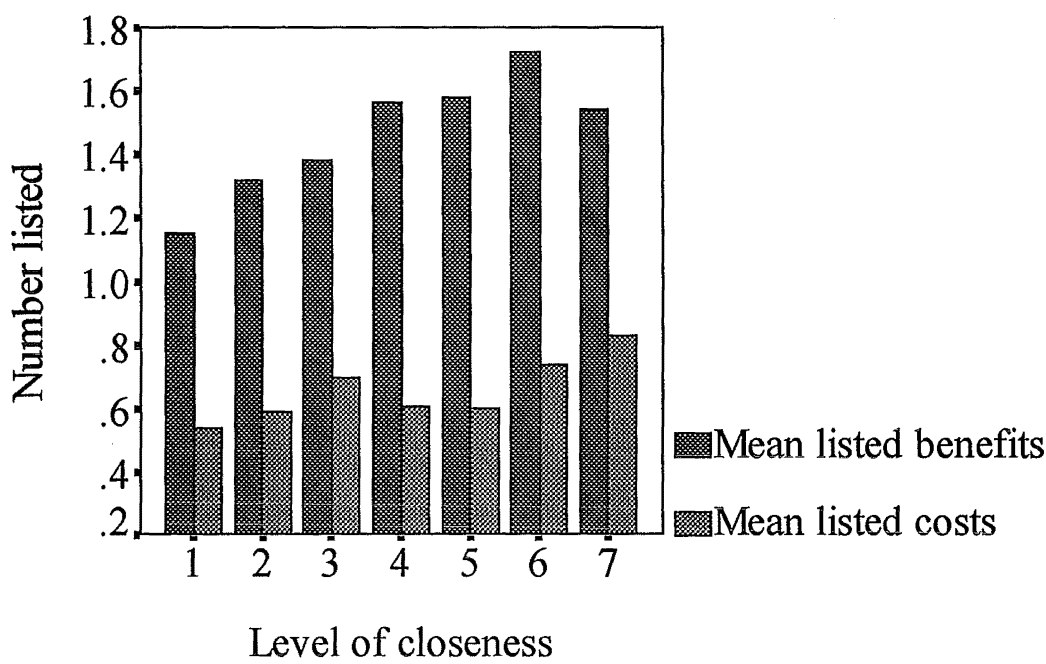


**Hypotheses:**

The first hypothesis postulated that as the level of closeness increased, the number of benefits and costs would increase. Therefore, a significant correlation was expected between the reported level of closeness and the number of responses given in the open

ended question. This was not found to be the case. The number of benefits was found to increase as the level of closeness of the friendship increased ( $r = .12, p < .02$ ). However the number of costs did not increase as the level of closeness did ( $r = .09, n.s.$ ). Thus the hypothesis was not confirmed because even though the number of benefits increased with closeness, the number of costs did not.

Figure 13 Mean number of benefits and costs listed for each level of closeness

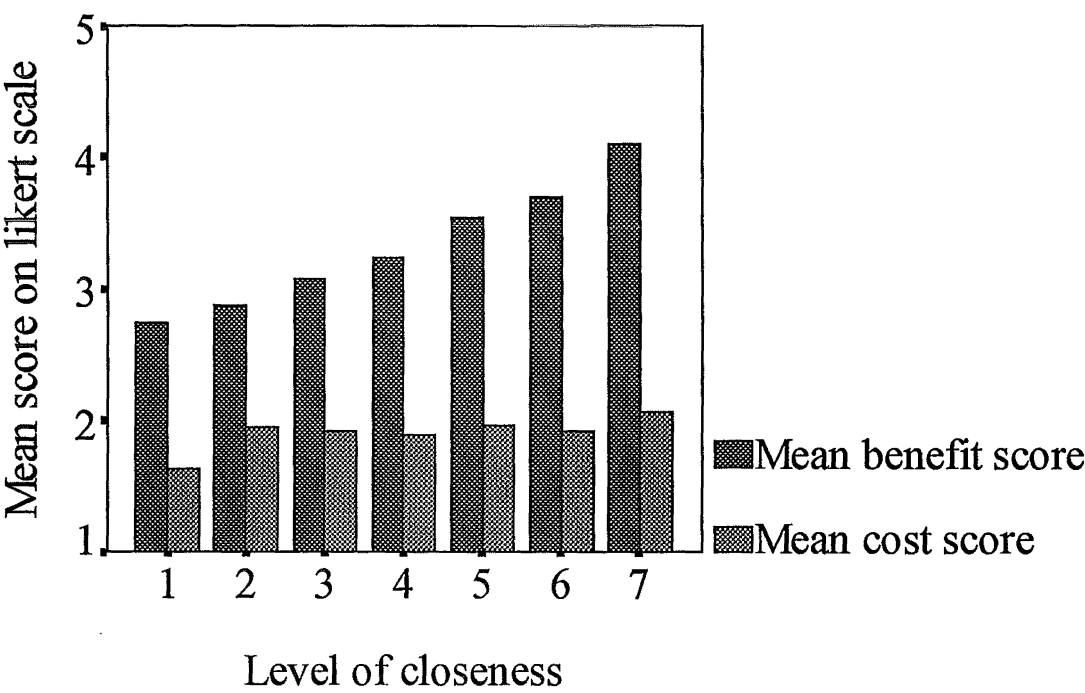


The second hypothesis postulated that the intensity or applicability of each benefit and cost category would increase as the level of closeness increased. Two correlations were calculated to determine whether to reject the hypothesis: The first between the average cost score and level of closeness of a specific friendship and the second between the average benefit score and the level of closeness of the friendship. If both were significant positive correlations, the hypothesis would be rejected. The correlation between benefits and level of closeness was  $r = .61, p < .001$  and the correlation between costs and level of closeness was  $r = .12, p < .02$ . Because both correlations are positive and significant, it



was concluded that as the level of closeness increases, the intensity of both the costs and the benefits of specific friendships increase.

Figure 14 Mean benefit and cost score on the likert scale for each level of closeness



## ***CHAPTER FOUR:***

### ***DISCUSSION***

This research investigated the benefits and the costs of adolescent friendships. Of particular interest were the costs related to friendships, as these have been overlooked by past researchers. The study found three categories of costs (costs of intimacy, conflict, romantic difficulties) and an additional miscellaneous category:

First, there exists conflict-related costs: A variety of problems cause barriers between the friends which most often detract from the friendship. Some are more confrontational, as is the case with arguments and putdowns. These are often triggered by more indirect forms of conflict. Friends can compete either socially, academically, or sportingly which can lead to jealousy and ultimately overt conflict. Personality clashes or dislikes can cause frustration because the adolescent does not believe the friend really knows or understands them. Again, this is likely to trigger arguments and putdowns.

The second category of costs is those related to having an intimate relationship with the friend. Some adolescents perceive the friendship to be placing excessive demands on themselves. Some do not like sharing of themselves and yet feel obligated to do so. Following the sharing of problems and secrets, there is always the risk that the friend may break the confidence and hence, violate the trust held between the friends.

Intimate friends typically spend a lot of time together. This can lead to feelings of jealousy, possessiveness and ultimately dependence. Other friendships can suffer because they are either neglected or excluded. Alternatively, other friends may get in the way resulting in the intimate friends not being able to spend quality time together.

When cross-sex friends are intimate but not romantically involved, the pressure and comments from others who perceive the relationship as romantic, can be a source of annoyance and frustration. This aspect of intimacy-related cost did not fit into the romantic difficulties category, because the misperception of romance by others was

caused by the intimacy between the friends. Also it was not reported as being an issue for the friends themselves.

The third cost category is difficulties related to romantic matters within the friendship itself. This was only connected to cross-sex friendships: There is often confusion or an imbalance in the perception of both friends, concerning romantic feelings for one another. The adolescent can either wish for a romantic relationship or be unsure whether they wish for one. Alternatively, they may be aware of the friend wanting such a relationship. All these ambiguities are likely to cause either or both parties to be less relaxed and more guarded in interaction.

Another difficulty in this category is again there is uncomfortableness except this time due to a past romantic involvement. When romantic attachments dissolve, it takes time before friendship terms are redeveloped. This transition period, which may never terminate, is difficult in that the friends will have different ideas and expectations concerning the closeness of the friendship. Differences in expectations are often due to the issue of why the relationship was called off and who dissolved it. For example, if the relationship was called off due to one of the partners being unfaithful, it would be expected that the faithful partner will have lost trust in the unfaithful partner. Hence, it would take more time (maybe a lifetime) to re-establish a mutual friendship.

The fourth and final category includes those costs not able to be categorised into any one of the other three. Four in particular are worthy of mention: A lack of contact between friends was the most common complaint of all the 26 cost subcategories. Friends lived too far away, were not allowed on the phone for extended conversations or went to different schools, causing the adolescents to complain about the practical difficulty they

have in interacting with their friend. Three other miscellaneous costs were monetary costs, getting into trouble and the extent of the age difference between the friends.

Four benefit categories were also created. Three of these, intimacy, companionship, and material gains, have been utilized by other researchers. The fourth, mutuality, has previously been classified under the term intimacy. However, it differs significantly from intimacy in that it is primarily a 'giving' or 'self-less' benefit. Friends provide the adolescent with someone whom they can help and do things for.

Benefits were much more common and more intense than the costs of friendship. Given the opportunity to respond freely, participants listed more than twice as many benefits as costs. Following this, when asked to rate how applicable certain benefits and costs were to their friendships, every benefit category averaged higher ratings than all the cost categories. Social exchange theory would predict this. Adolescents are only likely to be in a friendship if the rewards are outweighing the costs. Participants were reporting on who they considered to be their closest friend. This may be accounted for, in that they were receiving many more benefits than costs as a result of that friendship.

### *Level of Closeness*

Social exchange theory postulates that costs and benefits of relationships will increase as the level of closeness increases. The first hypothesis predicted that the number of costs and benefits reported would increase as the perceived level of closeness increased. The hypothesis was not confirmed in that although the number of benefits did increase with closeness, the number of costs did not. It is possible that lower reported levels of closeness are brought about by the costs and difficulties that are associated with the friend. For example, if there is a personality clash between the friends, it is unlikely for

the friendship to be perceived as close as for a friendship with no such clash. Close friendships are just as likely to have costs, but these are more likely to be related to intimacy.

The second hypothesis predicted that the intensity of the costs and the benefits would increase as the level of closeness increased. This hypothesis was confirmed. This supports social exchange theory that says that more evaluations are made of friendships as closeness develops. These evaluations cause more polarized and substantiated responses to likert scale type measures.

Levels of intimacy, companionship, material gains and the costs of intimacy, all increased as the level of closeness between the friends increased. However, as the conflict scores increased, the level of closeness scores decreased. Besides intimacy, the three other positive correlates with level of closeness, when analyzed alongside other predictors (gender of the participant and the gender of the friend being described), were still predictors of the intensity of the benefit and costs associated with the friendship.

### ***Gender Differences***

Past research had shown that, in general, females' friendships were more beneficial than males' (see for example Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). This was confirmed in that females reported more benefits than males. They also listed more costs on average than males.

Specifically, friendship with females had been found to be more intimate than friendships with males (Wright & Keple, 1981). Agreement for this was found in that female friends received higher intimacy ratings than male friends from both male and female participants. Despite intimacy being most likely to be reported as a benefit of a close

same-sex female friendship, when rating how intimate their friendships were, they did not give significantly higher ratings than males. However, as the level of closeness between the friends increased, females were more likely to rate their friendship as more intimate.

This research revealed some enlightenment on gender differences in companionship.

When asked to respond freely about the benefits of their friendships, both males and females were more likely to report companionship for a male friend. However, when asked to rate how companionate their friendships were, females gave significantly higher ratings than males. Although not entirely disparate findings, it does appear strange that females did not list companionship as a benefit more often than males on the free-response question. Perhaps it is explained in that when females reported intimacy as a benefit of friendship, their assumption was that companionship was the precursor or basis of it. In other words, in listing intimacy as a benefit of a close friendship, females (and intimate male friendships also) were assuming that a requirement or prerequisite of it is to spend time together (more commonly called companionship).

Same-sex friends were rated as more companionate than cross-sex friends. This is attributable to same-sex friends being much more likely to spend more time together.

The romantic pressures on cross-sex friendship result in less developed friendships that spend less time together. However, the level of closeness between same-sex friends was less likely to affect companionship ratings as cross-sex friends. Non-close cross-sex friends are likely to spend very little time together whereas extremely close cross-sex friends (who were often romantically involved in the present study) are likely to be exclusive and spend almost all their time together. In contrast, whether close or non-close, same-sex friends are likely to at least moderate amounts of time together.

As for companionship, both males and females were more likely to report material gains from their friendships with males. Once again though, females rated their friendships as having more material gains from both their same- and cross-sex friendships, than males. Females were even more likely to rate higher levels of material gains than males when their friendship were perceived to be closer.

In summary, females rated their friendships higher than males on both companionship and material gains. Contrary to predictions, they did not significantly rate their friendships higher on intimacy. Although females averaged higher, this was accounted for by the level of closeness between the friends rather than the gender of the participant itself.

Prior to this study, it was unknown which of, the level of closeness between friends, the gender of the participant, or the gender of the friend being described, could best account for individual differences in the intensity of the costs and benefits reported by adolescents. For this sample of New Zealand adolescents, the capability of the level of closeness to predict individual differences transcends that of gender of the participant and the gender of the friend being described. This finding must though be considered in conjunction with the average levels of closeness experienced in the four different types of friendship. As expected from the study of Buhrke and Fuqua (1987), female friendships with females averaged the highest level of closeness followed by males friendships with females.. Females friendships with males averaged the third highest level of closeness and male same-sex friendships were the least close. Therefore, in general, it would be expected that females would be likely to experience greater levels of benefits and costs within their friendships with females than the other three types of friendship. Male same-sex friendships would be more likely to experience lower levels and the remaining two



types of friendship would experience intermediate levels. This ordering was supported in all except two categories: Male same-sex friendships were the second most companionate. Same-sex friends spend more time together doing things and this applies for both males' and females' friendships; The second exception was that for the conflict category where the order was completely reversed. Male same-sex friendships experienced the most conflict and female friendships the least. Males' friendships were less close, possibly due to this conflict which included subcategories such as personality clashes, differing interests and competitiveness.

### ***Limitations of the present study and directions for further research***

The present study found that less than 2% of adolescents considered themselves not to have a close friend. This appears to be an extremely low percentage. This may be partly due to the technique used to administer the questionnaire. Participants completed their questionnaires in a classroom setting, which was used to provide a greater sample size. It was however disadvantageous in that participants were able to look over their neighbour's responses. As adolescents desire to be liked and not rejected by their peers, they would be less likely to admit having no friends when there are friends looking over their shoulders at their responses.

Often the 'closest friends' being reported on will be the person sitting next to them. This poses two problems: The adolescent may feel obligated to report on the friend even if they do not feel close to them; If they do report on the friend they are sitting next to, the participant may find difficulty responding openly particularly about the costs of their friendship. As friends, it is possible that it is not common for them to communicate to each other the costs and difficulties of their own friendships.

To alleviate these administrative problems, interviewing techniques could be utilized.

Although costly to the researcher, they release the pressure from peers and may result in a larger number of adolescents admitting to having no close friends.

Each participant was asked to report on firstly their closest same-sex friend and then their closest cross-sex friend. Two problems are apparent as a result of this ordering:

When adolescents were answering the open-ended question referring to their cross-sex friend, responses were often comparisons made with the same-sex friend. One participant said:

“I enjoy the different company compared to my same-sex friend.”

This sort of response is difficult to categorize because it is comparative rather than informative in nature. The second problem with the set ordering of reporting again concerns the open-ended cross-sex responses. These were often primed by the likert scale statements used for the same-sex friend. That is, some participants gave responses that mirrored one or more of the likert statements.

It would appear necessary to study same- and cross-sex separately or at least vary the order in which the participants were to respond. The advantage of the latter is that it allows within-subject comparisons to be made between same- and cross-sex friends.

This study encountered similar difficulties in studying cross-sex friendships to those of Youniss and Smollar's (1985) study. It was clear that some participants made a distinction between their closest cross-sex friend and their romantic partner, as the following female did:

“Competition and jealousy from boyfriend having such a close male friend.”

Conversely, other participants did not make this differentiation. One female said:

“Hurt if we (when we) break up (he a boyfriend).”

This research purposely did not stipulate which the participants were to respond about, as it was primarily concerned with looking at peer relationships as a whole. However, the benefits and costs of romantic relationships and friendships will probably differ. For example, a reported benefit of a romantic relationship was physical pleasure. It would be therefore seem necessary for future research to make clear which type of relationship is being studied.

Cross-sex friendships also have a set of benefits and costs unique to themselves. In particular, the costs relate to the pressures either from others or within the friendship, concerning a romantic attachment. These problems cause interaction between cross-sex friends to be more awkward. Further research needs to elaborate on the pressures and how they affect the dynamics of the friendships.

As research concerning the costs of friendships is so underdeveloped, the present research findings are only preliminary in nature. That is, the categorizing of costs was undertaken without any help from prior research. Now that a list of potential costs has been made, further research may be able to employ statistical techniques such as cluster analysis or multidimensional scaling to further solidify the categories discovered. In addition, the miscellaneous category may be able to be further reduced into two new categories. The first of these could be termed the costs of companionship. It would involve problems that are caused by spending or not spending time together such as the ‘lack of contact’ subcategory. The second postulated new category would be called material costs and would include among others, monetary costs. The present research could not justify the use of such techniques due to insignificant response numbers.

Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to determine the long-term consequences of the costs and difficulties. Do they ultimately lead to friendship dissolution? It would seem likely that some would end, but concurrently, other friendships would be strengthened by the same difficulties. The long-term consequences of the benefits reported are also unknown. It would appear that intimacy, companionship and mutuality are likely to increase the length of a friendship whereas material gains, because of its selfish nature, is less likely to do so.

Another aspect of friendship worthy of attention from future research is the developmental significance of the costs found in this study. It would appear reasonable to assume that problems encountered in friendships are as important as benefits with respect to the growth or shaping of the adolescent. For example, intimacy and the potential loss of independence attributed to intimacy together enable the adolescent to understand how such relationships best operate.

The level of closeness between friends has been confirmed as an effective predictor of the costs and the benefits of close friendship. The ensuing question is what causes individual differences in perceptions of the level of closeness between friends. Investigation of both friends in the dyad is likely to reveal significant differences in the subjective measure of closeness due to a variety of factors. Two personal determinants worthy of examination are the participants' introvertedness or extravertedness and also the participants' past experience of friendship. It would be expected that extraverted adolescents with no experience of close friendship will perceive their friendships to be closer than introverted individuals who have had past experiences with which to compare their present friendships with.

Gender socialization has been suggested as a reason for differences in closeness between males and females. Although not answering the question why, this research has shown that socialization is developed strongly by late adolescence.

## ***Conclusions***

Rawlins(1983) said that one of the major difficulties in adolescence is attempting to successfully develop interdependent relationships. This study confirms this in that as friendships become more intimate, a variety of problems concerning independence are likely to surface: One of the major tasks of adolescence is to form an identity. To achieve this, adolescents seek to attain independence from their families. Consequently, there are some who find this identity in-and-of-themselves. However, others displace this dependency from their parents to their friends. They do this because they need to feel accepted by others. This can lead to the adolescent becoming overdependent and possessive of their friend, and the friend may feel overcrowded and frustrated at their loss of independence. Difficulties between the friends is often due to different or imbalanced expectations of how dependent friends will be on each other.

Traditionally, the peer group are reported as having a negative influence on the adolescent. In contrast, close friendships are held in high esteem by researchers. Although this is essentially true, there are issues surrounding friendships which are problematic in nature. The present study adopted an adolescent perspective of friendships. It revealed the existing costs of close friendships according to adolescents. Problems concerning independence were found to be central to many costs related to close friendship.

The costs and benefits of adolescent friendship are partially determined by gender, whether the friend is same- or cross-sex and the level of closeness between the friends. The level of closeness is the most influential of the three aforementioned predictors of costs and benefits. As friends become closer, they are likely to experience more intensely costs and benefits. However, an exception to this is that conflict is likely to decrease as friends become closer. Female friendships are closer and therefore, are generally more beneficial and costly to the adolescent.

Friendship during adolescence is broadly experienced and not confined to certain privileged adolescents. Whether it be a close intimate friendship or a distant friend, almost all adolescents have friends. On the whole, they spend a lot of time together, and this provides a great deal towards making life better for the adolescent. As Button(1979) says:

“friendship may be seen as a gentle, continuing therapy, providing a cleansing and restoration that prepares the partners to face another day.” (p196)

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***APPENDIX 1:***

***QUESTIONNAIRE***

## ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS

**Answer all questions, where applicable, with regard to yourself. Please answer as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. It is your experience of friends and friendships that is of interest to me. If any response is too long for the space provided, please use the reverse side of the page to complete the answer. Be sure to number these questions as you answer them. If you do find any question too hard to answer then leave it out but please try to answer all applicable questions.**

## SECTION A:

**Office use  
only**

- 1. GENDER:** FEMALE MALE (Circle one) ☐
- 2. ETHNICITY/RACE:** Maori Pakeha/European Asian  
Pacific Islander Other (Please specify): (Circle one) ☐
- 3. Would you say you have any close friends at present?** ☐
- If No, go to **SECTION B (Below)**
- If Yes, go to **SECTION C (Page 2)**

## SECTION B:

1. Why do you think you have no close friends at present?.....  
.....
2. Do you feel it is a choice that you have made? YES NO (Circle one)
3. What do you think are the benefits or payoffs of having no close friends?  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. What do you think are the costs and difficulties of not having any close friends?  
.....

.....

☐

.....

☐

.....

☐

5. Do you put more time into other activities? YES NO (Circle one). If so what? .....

☐

.....

☐

6. Has your past experiences of friendship been a reason for you not having any close friends? YES NO (Circle one) If so, why is this the case?.....

☐

.....

☐

Now go to SECTION D ( Page 5)

SECTION C

Think of your closest same sex friend. Now answer the following questions about this friend.

1..Age of friend: .....

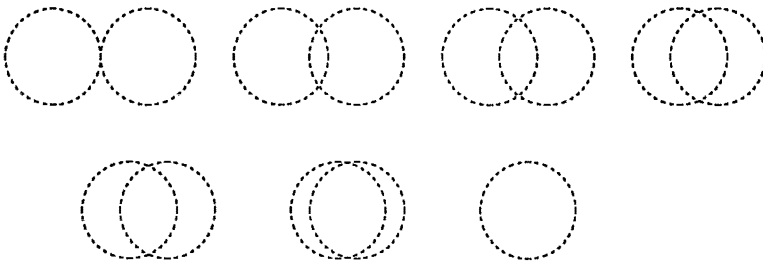
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2. Ethnicity/Race: .....

☐

3. Circle the figure that best describes how close you feel to your friend:

☐



4.Would you consider this friend to be a “best friend”? YES NO ( Circle one)

☐

5.What do you consider to be the benefits or payoffs for you that are a result of this friendship? .....

☐

.....

☐

.....

☐

.....

☐

6.What do you consider to be the costs or difficulties for you that are a result of this friendship? ..... ☐

..... ☐

..... ☐

..... ☐

7. For each of the following statements, using the scale below, put the number in the box that best describes your friendship:

- 1 = Not at all applicable to this friendship
- 2 = Slightly applicable to this friendship
- 3 = Moderately applicable to this friendship
- 4 = Very applicable to this friendship
- 5 = Extremely applicable to this friendship

- ☐ i. My friendship makes me feel more independent from my family.
- ☐ ii. My friend is a close companion.
- ☐ iii. My friend supports me all the time even when I am finding life difficult.
- ☐ iv. My friend and I often have conflict in our friendship.
- ☐ v. I feel I can tell my friend everything about myself and they will not tell anyone.
- ☐ vi. I often find myself jealous of my friend’s personality or possessions.
- ☐ vii. My friend and I do almost everything together.
- ☐ viii. My friendship helps me to feel better about myself.
- ☐ ix. I compete with my friend either sportingly or academically.
- ☐ x. My friendship means that I have many more friendships than before.
- ☐ xi. I suppose my friend and I tend to be rather exclusive.
- ☐ xii. When my friend gets depressed, I get upset as well.
- ☐ xiii. My friend often makes me feel worse about myself.
- ☐ xiv. I would say that my friend is too dependent on me.
- ☐ xv. We discuss our moral beliefs and values.
- ☐ xvi. My friend understands me.
- ☐ xvii. My friend gives me helpful advice that I normally use.
- ☐ xviii. We do bad things together that we would not do by ourselves.
- ☐ xix. I have a lot of fun when I am with my friend.



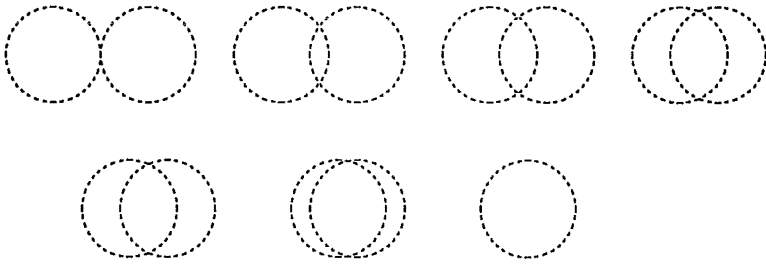
- ☐ xx. My friend is intolerant of my other friends.
- ☐ xxi. My friend accepts me just how I am.
- ☐ xxii. My friend is good to have deep or intellectual talks with.
- ☐ xxiii. I am probably a little too dependent on my friend.
- ☐ xxiv. My friend helps me with tasks I am working on.
- ☐ xxv. I often get bored when I am with my friend.
- ☐ xxvi. My friend gives me useful information about lots of things.
- ☐ xxvii. Often my friend is very irritating.
- ☐ xxviii. I know I can trust my friend.

Think of your closest opposite sex friend.If you **DO NOT** think you have a close opposite sex friend, go to **SECTION D (Page 5)** If you do, answer the following questions about this friend.

1..Age of friend :..... ☐

2. Ethnicity/Race: ..... ☐

3. Circle the figure that best describes how close you feel to your friend: ☐



4.Would you consider this friend to be a “best friend”? YES NO ( Circle one) ☐

5.What do you consider to be the benefits or payoffs for you that are a result of this friendship?..... ☐  
..... ☐  
..... ☐  
..... ☐

6.What do you consider to be the costs or difficulties for you that are a result of this friendship?..... ☐  
..... ☐

.....

☐

.....

☐

7. For each of the following statements, using the scale below, put the number in the box that best describes your friendship:

- 1 = Not at all applicable to this friendship
- 2 = Slightly applicable to this friendship
- 3 = Moderately applicable to this friendship
- 4 = Very applicable to this friendship
- 5 = Extremely applicable to this friendship

- ☐ i. My friendship makes me feel more independent from my family.
- ☐ ii. My friend is a close companion.
- ☐ iii. My friend supports me all the time even when I am finding life difficult.
- ☐ iv. My friend and I often have conflict in our friendship.
- ☐ v. I feel I can tell my friend everything about myself and they will not tell anyone.
- ☐ vi. I often find myself jealous of my friend's personality or possessions.
- ☐ vii. My friend and I do almost everything together.
- ☐ viii. My friendship helps me to feel better about myself.
- ☐ ix. I compete with my friend either sportingly or academically.
- ☐ x. My friendship means that I have many more friendships than before.
- ☐ xi. I suppose my friend and I tend to be rather exclusive.
- ☐ xii. When my friend gets depressed, I get upset as well.
- ☐ xiii. My friend often makes me feel worse about myself.
- ☐ xiv. I would say that my friend is too dependent on me.
- ☐ xv. We discuss our moral beliefs and values.
- ☐ xvi. My friend understands me.
- ☐ xvii. My friend gives me helpful advice that I normally use.
- ☐ xviii. We do bad things together that we would not do by ourselves.
- ☐ xix. I have a lot of fun when I am with my friend.
- ☐ xx. My friend is intolerant of my other friends.
- ☐ xxi. My friend accepts me just how I am.

- ☐ xxii. My friend is good to have deep or intellectual talks with.
- ☐ xxiii. I am probably a little too dependent on my friend.
- ☐ xxiv. My friend helps me with tasks I am working on.
- ☐ xxv. I often get bored when I am with my friend.
- ☐ xxvi. My friend gives me useful information about lots of things.
- ☐ xxvii. Often my friend is very irritating.
- ☐ xxviii. I know I can trust my friend.

**SECTION D**

**Now think of a person who used to be a friend but is no longer. Once you have thought of this friend, answer these questions:**

- 1.What are the reasons for you no longer being friends? .....

.....

.....

.....

.....
2. How did the loss of this friendship make you feel? .....

.....

.....
3. What sort of effect did the loss of this friendship have on you? .....

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your participation in the research.**

**Matt Button**

***APPENDIX 2:***

***DESCRIPTION AND EXAMPLES***

***OF THE CREATED CATEGORIES***

The subcategories that make up the categories, along with some typical responses from the open-ended questions, are given to provide a more comprehensive account of the categories created for this research:

### ***Conflict:***

#### **Subcategories:**

- 1) Arguments**
- 2) Personality differences**
- 3) Does not get on with other friends**
- 4) Different opinions**
- 5) Different interests**
- 6) Barriers to understanding**
- 7) Putdowns**
- 8) Competitiveness**

#### **Typical responses:**

- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "Sometimes you get hurt if she says some things which you feel are a bit mean"
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: " Sometimes I can not understand why he feels a certain way and vice-versa..."
- ⇒ Male describing female friend: "My best friends don't get along with her very well making me choose between her or them."
- ⇒ Male describing female friend: "On occasions she can get slightly irritating."

### ***Costs Of Intimacy:***

#### **Subcategories:**

- 1) Other friendships suffer**
- 2) Jealous or possessive self**
- 3) Friend too dependent**
- 4) Exclusive friendship**
- 5) Life is too public**
- 6) Unable to spend quality time together**
- 7) Feeling helpless when friend is in need**
- 8) Others perceive friendship as romance**
- 9) Possibility of trust violation**

#### **Typical responses:**

- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "Sometimes burdened with her worries, that I have promised not to talk to anyone else about."
- ⇒ Male describing male friend: "He becomes a little too dependent on me like on weekends when we go out he always expects me to be there..."
- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "This person thinks that she should know all details of my life. And there some things I don't want to say and some responses that I don't want to hear."
- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "Loss of other friends - overlooking others sometimes caused them to feel left out."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "People think I'm 'getting it on' or going out with him."

## ***Romantic Difficulties:***

### **Subcategories:**

- 1) Confusion over feelings of either friend towards a romantic relationship**
- 2) Uncomfortableness due to past romance together**

### **Typical responses:**

- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "It is hard making sure he doesn't get the wrong idea."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "...that I like him more than a friend sometimes."
- ⇒ Male describing female friend: "People think that she is your girlfriend."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "It is often misread as a relationship not a friendship."

## ***Miscellaneous***

### ***Money:* Typical responses:**

- ⇒ Male describing female friend: "She spends all my money..."
- ⇒ Male describing male friend: "... only the price of petrol to get to their place."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "The price of toll calls."

### ***Lack of Contact:* Typical response:**

- ⇒ Male describing male friend: "He lives so far away we can not visit each other very much."

### ***Lack of quality time together:* Typical responses:**

- ⇒ Male describing male friend: "Each being busy and occupying a different circle of friends makes it difficult to spend 'quality' time together, let alone any time. Occasionally I can take this unspoken frustration out on others."

***Age difference:*** Typical responses:

- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "My parents are worried about the age difference."
- ⇒ Male describing female friend: "She is older than me and doesn't always have time for me."

***Intimacy:***Subcategories:

- 1) Intimacy/confidant
- 2) Emotional intimacy
- 3) Increase self-esteem
- 4) Similarity of personalities

Typical responses:

- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "We can talk to each other about any problems we have and we're both there for each other."
- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "Having someone to talk to who is the same age and sort of thinks the way I do."
- ⇒ Female describing female friend: "...there is always someone there through the good times and the bad and you can always trust them."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "Someone I can confide in more than anyone else, we tell each other of family/friend problems and he totally knows and sympathises with how I feel, we make each other feel better just being together."

***Companionship:***Subcategories:

- 1) Companionship



## **2) Positive social interaction**

### **3) Someone to talk to**

#### Typical responses:

- ⇒ Male describing male friend: “A good mate to have a yarn with now and again, a person to hang round with, laugh with, and play sport with.”
- ⇒ Male describing male friend: “We both enjoy the same sports and hobbies, types of music, etc...”
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: “Go skiing together, do sports together. Go out to the movies or tea together, somebody to spend time with and have fun with.”

### ***Mutuality***

#### Subcategories:

- 1) Reciprocity**
- 2) Someone I can help**

#### Typical responses:

- ⇒ Female describing female friend: “Someone to care for...”
- ⇒ Female describing female friend: “...give and take, cooperation.”

### ***Material Gains***

#### Subcategories:

- 1) Instrumental help**
- 2) Sharing material possessions**
- 3) New experiences/perspectives**
- 4) Meet new people**

## 5) Opposite-sex perspective

### Typical responses:

- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "...kind of like a brother my own age who has different views or ideas to myself and female friends."
- ⇒ Male describing male friend: "We share clothes, tapes."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "I get to be friends with his other friends."
- ⇒ Female describing male friend: "You learn to relate to guys."